

Applied Research Program Summary of Health Disparities Research Resources NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

Overview

The Applied Research Program (ARP) is one of five programs in the National Cancer Institute's Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences. ARP evaluates patterns and trends in cancer-associated health behaviors, practices, genetic susceptibilities, outcomes, and services. It also determines the influence of these factors on patterns and trends in cancer incidence, morbidity, mortality, and survival. Measuring social inequalities and monitoring health disparities across the cancer control continuum is integral to ARP's work.

ARP supports three types of research resources that can be used by investigators interested in health disparities:

- Research networks
- Surveys and studies
- Tools for researchers

Research Networks: The Whole Becomes More Than the Sum of its Parts

ARP supports several networks of researchers based in academic institutions and community care settings. These investigators examine health behaviors, services, and outcomes relating to cancer prevention, screening, treatment, and care. The research is designed to allow investigators to examine differences in receipt of services across specific population groups, explore factors that contribute to disparities in outcomes, and identify ways to lessen those disparities.

Examples of Research Networks

- Cancer Research Network
- Cancer Care Outcomes Research and Surveillance Consortium
- Breast Cancer Surveillance Consortium

Surveys and Studies: Insights into Behavior, Care, Services, and Outcomes

ARP staff are involved with NCI-funded surveys that gather data about health status and conditions; cancer risk behaviors; access to care; insurance coverage; use of preventive, screening, and other health services; and quality of life.

Several features of these surveys make them particularly valuable resources for studying health disparities. For example, racial and ethnic groups that are not well represented in other surveys are found in large numbers in some of these surveys. This gives researchers an unprecedented chance to analyze differences in risk behaviors and receipt of preventive and screening services. Several of these surveys have been fielded in multiple languages, including Spanish, Chinese, and Korean.

ARP also supports cancer registry-based studies on patterns of care, quality of care, and cancer outcomes that examine factors that may contribute to disparities in the receipt of treatment, such as age, gender, race-ethnicity, insurance status, socioeconomic status, and geographic location.

Examples of Surveys and Studies

- National Health Interview Survey
- California Health Interview Survey
- Complementary and Alternative Medicine Survey in California
- Patterns of Care/Quality of Care Studies
- Prostate Cancer Outcomes Study
- Tobacco Use Supplement to the Current Population Survey
- Health, Eating, Activity, and Lifestyle Study

Tools for Researchers: Facilitating Investigator Innovation

Research tools developed by ARP staff, including data linkages, dietary assessment instruments, and guidance for questionnaire development and testing, have facilitated progress in cancer-related epidemiologic, surveillance, and health services research. They have allowed investigators to delve into differences in receipt of cancer services, examine cross-cultural equivalence of survey questions, and improve understanding of risk behaviors across various population groups.

Examples of Tools for Researchers

- SEER-Medicare Data Linkage
- Diet History Questionnaire
- Short Dietary Assessment Instruments
- Guides on questionnaire design, cognitive testing techniques, and item response theory modeling techniques
- Behavior coding research tools

Working with ARP

ARP funding opportunities focus on:

- Building capacity for cancer surveillance research
- Examining health behaviors and services
- Determining the influence of health behaviors and services on cancer burden

ARP currently sponsors five Program Announcements focused on aspects of health disparities and cancer:

- **The Effect of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination/Bias on Health Care Delivery:** Better assessment and reduction of racial/ethnic discrimination in health care delivery systems.
- **Cancer Surveillance Using Health Claims-based Data System:** Use of claims data, such as SEER-Medicare, to investigate trends, patterns, disparities in, and determinants of cancer care.

- **Improving Diet and Physical Activity Assessment:** Variations in risk factors and ways to improve the assessments of those factors among specific populations.
- **Economic Studies in Cancer Prevention, Screening, and Care:** Promote the optimal design of cancer prevention and control trial studies and interventions that will facilitate formulation of effective health care policy related to cancer prevention and control.
- **Economics of Diet, Activity, and Energy Balance:** Enhance the state-of-the-science on the causes of obesity and inform federal decision-making on effective public health interventions for reducing the rate of obesity in the U.S.

For More Information

- ❖ ARP research resources
<http://appliedresearch.cancer.gov>
- ❖ ARP health disparities research
<http://appliedresearch.cancer.gov/areas/disparities/projects.html>
- ❖ ARP funding opportunities
<http://appliedresearch.cancer.gov/areas/disparities/opportunities.html> and
<http://appliedresearch.cancer.gov/funding.html>
- ❖ DCCPS minority research and training
http://www.dccps.cancer.gov/funding_minority.html

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